

**New Lepidoptera records from a Bedfordshire site including *Ectoedemia sericopeza* (Zeller) (Lep. Nepticulidae) and *Coleophora lassella* Staudinger (Lep.: Coleophoridae)**

The Rothamsted Insect Survey trap at Cockayne Hatley, Bedfordshire (O.S. grid reference TL 2549), has now been in daily operation for 28 years. Only macrolepidoptera have been identified for the whole period, but for the last ten years one of us (IW) has extracted all microlepidoptera in weekly batches to be identified and counted by the other (DM). This provides a valuable 10-year daily dataset covering all the Lepidoptera. Despite a current species list of 476 microlepidoptera, new county records still occur regularly and 2003 was no exception with four new records for Bedfordshire (Vice County 30). Two of these, *Parectopa ononidis* (Zeller), and *Coleophora prunifoliae* Doets were not particularly noteworthy but the other two species were more interesting.

*Ectoedemia sericopeza* (Zell.) was present in the week commencing 6 August 2003, confirmed by dissection (one male). There are few published records for this species in Britain. Heath and Emmet (1976. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*, Volume 1) give records for VC 12 (North Hampshire) and 19 (North Essex). The Microlepidoptera Review for 1996 in this journal, adds VC 13 (West Sussex). The foodplant (Norway maple *Acer platanoides*), is present in the vicinity of the trap.

Two *Coleophora lassella* Stdgr. were identified, both by dissection of males – one in the week commencing 28 May, and one in the week from 4 June. Emmet (1996. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*, Volume 3) shows most records of this species to be sub-maritime, in Ireland and the south-west and south of England. The Microlepidoptera Review for 1999 adds VC 21 (Middlesex). The recorded foodplant for this species is toad rush *Juncus bufonius*, which occurs in the area.— DAVID MANNING, 27 Glebe Rise, Sharnbrook, Bedford MK44 1JB and IAN WOIWOD, Rothamsted Research, Harpenden, Hertfordshire SG19 2EA.

**Magpie Moth *Abraxas grossulariata* (L.) (Lep.: Geometridae) in North-east Scotland**

On 4 July 2003, a Robinson trap at my home address in Banffshire (VC 94) attracted a male Magpie Moth *Abraxas grossulariata*. It was a new species for this intensively worked site. Even so, I thought little of it until two more were caught on 6 July 2003, with a further individual on 8 July 2003. This was too much for coincidence, especially when other local recorders reported the first sightings in their area of North-east Scotland (VCs 91 – 94) for many years, as follows:

VC 91 Kincardineshire: Kincorth, Aberdeen, 17.vii.2003, adult in garden by day (B. Stewart).

VC 92 South Aberdeenshire: Blackdog Links, 10.vii.2003, adult by day (N. Littlewood).

VC 93 North Aberdeenshire: Auchnagatt, 5.vii.2003, adult to light trap (C. J. Harlow).

Loch of Strathbeg, summer 2003, many adults (S. Paterson, RSPB).

New Deer, summer 2003, adult (per R. M. Palmer).

Formerly an abundant pest, Magpie Moth has become scarcer over most of Britain (West, B. K., 1991. *Ent. Rec.* **103**: 89-92). It is one of a group of species with aposematic larvae, but otherwise unrelated, for which Rothamsted light trap records show a serious long-term decline in numbers caught (Woiwod, I., 2003. *Butterfly Conservation News* **82**: 9-11).

This decline is reflected in North-east Scotland. In and around the Aberdeen urban area (VCs 91 & 92) R. M. Palmer (pers. comm.) recorded adults and larvae commonly on *Ribes* (including flowering currant) from his arrival in 1968 until 1974, with particular abundance in 1972. Numbers then dwindled, the last larval records being in 1978, though adults continued to be recorded sparingly until 1991. In North Aberdeenshire, the moth was recorded at Oldmeldrum in 1979 but has not been seen since at a continuously worked site (M. R. Young). Yet this vice-county holds the only known surviving colony of Magpie Moth in North-east Scotland, on the coast at Buchanhaven near Peterhead. Here, the moth is still recorded, sometimes in abundance as in 1996. Flowering currant is its main foodplant, though caterpillars have been found on osier *Salix viminalis*, and one on *Euonymus japonicus* in 2003 (M. Innes). In Banffshire, caterpillars were annually a pest on garden gooseberry at Aberchirder up to 1986, since when no moths or larvae have been seen (Rosemary Smith). The last VC 94 record before mine was of two caterpillars on black currant in Banff in 1990.

Remarkably, the evidence suggests that, except at Peterhead, Magpie Moth has not been a permanent resident of North-east Scotland for perhaps fifteen years. Such a conspicuous species could hardly be overlooked. Nor is there any obvious reason for its plight, as many of the gardens where the species was previously found seem unchanged and retain their *Ribes* bushes, the main foodplant in this region. Even when the species flourished in urban areas it was rarely encountered in the wider countryside.

In north-western Scotland, including the Hebrides, it is a different story. Here, Magpie Moth has remained abundant, but apparently the population undergoes great fluctuations both locally and from year to year. Also, the main foodplant is heather *Calluna vulgaris*, though other plants such as willow *Salix* are also used. Surprisingly, even Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis* and lodgepole pine *Pinus contorta* can be attacked, as during an outbreak in a Forest Research experimental block during June 2000 at Loch Borrolan, West Sutherland VC 108 (D. Williams).

In summer 2003, Magpie Moth had a population explosion in north-west and northern Scotland. Horsfield, D. & Macdonald, A. J. (*Ent. Rec.* **116**: 81-83) recorded browning of the heather due to larval feeding damage in numerous localities from Skye to Loch Eriboll, then along the north coast to Dunnet Head in Caithness. Many of the browned patches ranged from 5-10 ha in extent, some even up to 25 ha. Resultant imagines occurred at densities of up to 10-20 individuals per square metre.

The species was also abundant on Orkney in 2003, where it is apparently a recent colonist, the first larval record being in May 2000. (T. Prescott, S. Gauld).

Might these outbreaks explain the North-east Scotland records for 2003? With such huge numbers present only 80 miles or so to the north-west, a few such strays would hardly be surprising. Significantly, my specimens at Ordiquhill were caught after a four-day period of sustained north-westerly winds that were initially strong then gradually moderated.

Will these strays enable Magpie Moth to re-colonise North-east Scotland? All my examples were males, but doubtless females can be windblown too. If so, would their progeny feed on heather? The caterpillar has never been recorded on that foodplant in our area, possibly because most heather moorland here is at a higher altitude and further from the coast than that used in the north-west.

I thank the observers named in the text for so helpfully providing me with information.—ROY LEVERTON, Whitewells, Ordiquhill, Cornhill, Banffshire AB45 2HS.

### Some further examples of late broods of Lepidoptera

A great deal has been written about late broods of some of our Lepidoptera, which may be caused by global warming. I now note further examples of late broods which I have not mentioned before that have occurred on the Isle of Wight.

*Donacaula forficella* (Thunb.) 23 August 2003, at Totland. Single-brooded in June and July according to Goater (1986. *British Pyralid Moths*. Harley Books).

*Microstega hyalinalis* (Hb.) 5 & 9 September 2003, at Totland. There has only been one previous record of this species, on the Island and it is single-brooded in June and July according to Goater (*op. cit.*).

*Idaea dimidiata* (Hufn.) Single-dotted Wave, 11 October 2002 at Bonchurch.

*Idaea trigeminuata* (Haw.) Treble Brown Spot 11 October 2003 at Bonchurch.

*Idaea aversata* (L.) Riband Wave, 30 September 2003 at Totland.

*Drepaua binaria* (Hufn.) Oak Hook-tip, 10 September 2003 at Totland.

*Agrotis clavis* (Hufn.) Heart & Club, 27 September 2003 at Totland.

*Hadena rivularis* (Fabr.) Champion., 27 August 2003 at Totland.

*Euplexia lucipara* (L.) Small Angle Shades 30 August 2003 at Totland.

*Acrouicta runicis* (L.) Knot Grass, 12, 17, 20 & 21 September 2003 at Totland.

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